Prayer

My desire to attend C.E. last Sunday. Prevented. Will make my contribution to the topic this morning.

The scene of Jesus praying and the disciples standing by. The request of one of the disciplesk"Lod, teach us to pray."

Evidently the results of our praying depend largely upon how we pray.

I. First, some examples of prayer, that we may know what praying is.

1. We read that when Abraham left Ur, as the shades of night closed about him, he pitched his tent,"and there he builded an altar ... and called upon the name of the Lord."

The inmost soul of Abraham calling to the One whom he was obeying. ~~The deep of the creature~~ The soul of the creature calling upon the soul of the Creator. Man talking with God, breathing communion within his soul. Herein we find the essence of all true prayer.

2. This Call upto God sometimes takes the form of a Cry. The psalmist, 23 times, tells how he cried unto the Lord "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He answered me". How often sorrow overwhelms us and we have no answer (but a cry.

The world does'nt understand the cry of an infant, but its mother does. She knows the meaning of her baby's cry. The world may not know our heart's deep distressing cry, but the tender heart of Heaven knows all about it. How God answered the aching cry of my broken heart when my mother passed away.

The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemene was a cry. And God so answered it that Christ was able to arise and calmly go to his cross.

3. Sometimes prayer is the seeking after the forgiveness and favor of God.

The ancient custom of guilty people seeking the favor of their kings.

This is the picture when the psalmist declares, "Thy face, o Lord, will I seek: hide not thy face from me."

How often when we approach God in prayer that it seems his face is turned from us. We get no response. And yet if we would only stop to think of the many times during the day that we failed to do our duty and the many things we did that we should not have done, we cease to wo wonder that our sin-hating God and Father seems to turn His face from us, until we have humbly begged His pardon.

4.3. Prayer is not a matter of words but an experience.
Prayer cannot be defined, it must be experienced.

Example. When we stand beside the lifeless form of a departed loved one, why our sorrow and t ears? Not because those eyes are closed, those lips are sealed and those hands are still. But when we spoke speak there is no answer. When we lift the hand it falls back. The communion ties of love seems to be severed and we feel that we are left alone. In the last analysis our sorrow is loneliness. The sense of fellowship is broken.

On the other hand we all know the joy of companionship with dear ones. Wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. Family reunions. Visit of dear friends! What is all this joy but the spoken or unspoken communion of kindred spirits one with another? And so it is with prayer. God speaking to His children, His children speaking to Him, sometimes with words and often without words. This prayer-communion with God is an experience of the soul, and must be expernienced to be understood.

Prayer, then, is personal fellowship with God, by means of whichthe soul, in faith,touches the heart of the Infinit and becomes charged with the great universal dynamic.

"What a privelege to carry everything to God in prayer"

How my mother, when everything went wrong or when something happened hard to bear, used to go to the Lord in prayer and come back serene and calm.

It is this in prayer which makes it such a vital force in a man's life. And after a man finds this vital fact about prayer, once experiencing how it works in his own soul, he is'nt concerned about whether God ansewrs prayer or not, or what prayer is or how it works. Without this personal communion with God no soul can can reach its maturity of development and realize its capacity of spiritual power.

It is'nt a matter of words, nor a matter of how long we pray, but a matter of how we pray, a matter of actual communion with God- it must be a call unto God, it may be just a Cry or a seeking after forgiveness.

Now, just a word as to whether God does answer prayer and how.

How do mothers and fathers answer the requests of the their children? In one of four ways. They either grant the request at once, or they delay answering it, or they answer it only in part or they refuse the request altogeth But in everycase fathomless love for the child and a superior judgment guides the mother or father.

God answers our prayers just the same way.

Sometimes God answers at once.
He did the dying thief.
Sometimes God delays- Jesus waited several days tho Lazarus lay at the point of death. But when the prayer of Mary and Martha was answered it was answered way beyond their expectations.
Sometimes God answers only in part.
Paul's prayer that they be saved from the storm.
Sometimes God answers differently from what we expect.
The prodical's request that he be made a servant.
Sometimes God never answers our prayers at all.
Paul's thorn in the flesh. And yet, a blessing came to Paul greater than an answer would have been. "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
Your unanswered prayers may be to you, unconsciously perhaps, the sweetening, softening, saving power of Christ within you.

I am afraid so many of our prayers are not answered because 9/10 of them are for self whereas 9/10 of them should be for others. The prayers of Jesus from beginning to end were intercessary- prayers on behalf of others.

Again, our pyayers should be chiefly for the glory of God.
Hear Jesus in Gethsemene-"Not my will but thine be done". After all is said, prayer is but the swinging of the soul in line with the will of God.
It is this that enables us to tune in to the Infinite and get the clear voice of God without interference.
Prayer is the door thru which we enter into submission to the highest purposes of heaven for us.
We shoul pray less to be kept from stress or trial and more for grace sufficient to meet whatevr comes unflinchinglyand uncomplainingly:
not so much that we nay succeed as that, when at times we fail, there may be given to us the courage and wisdom to rise up and faithfully try again
not so much for sunshine and clear sky as that, when clouds gather and night darkens the day, our lamp of faith may be kept shining undimmed,
that thru all the vicissitudes of life our praying shall be like that of the Master, "Father glorify thy